

Could Be Worse by GhostGrantaire

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Summary:

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Could Be Worse

Author's Note:

Originally posted on my tumblr (ghost-grantaire) but I wanted to save it on my AO3

“Oh my god.” Nancy’s jaw dropped. She was going to *kill* her brother.

She was holding the shirt that should have been her plain grey T-shirt for gym, but instead was a smaller, unflattering grey shirt with the Star Wars logo plastered across the chest above art of all the main characters of the saga.

None of the other girls seemed to notice or care as they changed quickly and made their way out of the locker room. She glanced at the clock, groaning when she realized she was going to be late unless she changed right away. Grumbling, she stripped out of her sweater and top and pulled on the T-shirt. Luckily it was one of the shirts Mike had bought a size too large, so while it was small, it wasn’t unbearable. She threw her stuff into a locker and quickly walked to join the rest of the girls outside.

To add insult to injury, the coach had lectured her for five minutes in front of everyone about proper attire before announcing that they were going to play soccer that day, which Nancy absolutely detested.

God she hated gym class.

Nancy managed to avoid most contact with the ball by hovering around the sidelines. About fifteen minutes into the game, however, one of her more athletic teammates made the terrible decision of passing to her. She noticed too late, and they all watched the ball fly off the field until it hit a fence.

“Wheeler, go get it,” the coach told her, shaking her head. Nancy just nodded, but as soon as she turned away she started muttering under her breath as she walked towards the ball.

She’d never understand why she was still being subjected to gym

class. Last year she'd been lucky enough to share the class with Barb, and the two of them had been able to hang in the background unbothered through most of classes. This year she was all on her own, and it made all the difference in the world. She pulled at the small shirt in frustration, frowning when it kept rising above her waistband.

"Hey, looking for this?"

She looked up at the voice, blinking in surprise. Steve Harrington was holding the soccer ball, eyebrows raised expectantly. He was wearing small gym shorts and a grey T-shirt as well, as she realized he must be in his own PE class as well. After a second, his eyes flicked down to her shirt. He smirked.

Embarrassed, Nancy just nodded quickly and took the ball, holding it in front of her to block him from seeing any more of the nerdy design.

"Come on Wheeler, hurry it up!" Coach Johnson called, and Nancy blushed.

"Thanks," she muttered before jogging back to the class.

Only forty more minutes, and then she could change back into her own clothes.

History was her last class of the day, and luckily she wasn't on her own for this one. She was able to rant to Barb as they walked to the class together, even though she got the feeling that her friend thought she was a bit too angry at her brother for the prank. Whatever. She was a sixteen-year-old girl. She was allowed to hate her baby brother, right?

They separated once they entered the class, Barb sitting by the door and Nancy heading towards her assigned seat in the back corner.

"Hey Nancy," Steve greeted her as she set down her stuff. Nancy looked over at Steve Harrington, who was throwing his stuff down on the desk next to her.

“Hi,” she answered back nonchalantly, giving a polite smile. She tried not to think about their run-in earlier, but she had a feeling he’d already forgotten about it. Even though they’d sat next to each other in history for months (as well as having attended the same schools since they were five), they barely ever spoke. She doubted he knew anything about her besides her first name.

The class passed slowly, as it always did. Ms. Katz was a fine teacher, Nancy supposed. It wasn’t the teacher’s fault that she hated history as much as she did.

She was doodling small UFO’s and dogs in the margins of her notebook when something lightly tapped her arm. She looked over to see a ripped piece of paper folded into fourths.

Nancy stared at the note, picking it up from the corner of her desk so Ms. Katz wouldn’t see it and snatch it up. She frowned when she saw there was no name written on the outside. She glanced around, but nobody seemed expectant, and being in the corner meant that there was really nobody else to receive it. Nancy looked at Steve again, who was tapping his pen repeatedly as watched Ms. Katz.

Sensing her gaze, he looked up and smirked. After glancing towards the front of the classroom cautiously, he raised his eyebrows at her and mimed opening the folded piece of paper.

She was wary, of course, but figured it couldn’t hurt to just read it. Not checking to see if Steve was watching her, she unfolded it and stared at the dark ink waiting inside.

Didn’t take you for a Star Wars fan. Cute shirt though

Nancy read it three times, just to be sure. She was blushing intensely, she knew, so she hid her face as she attempted to get back to the lecture. She tried to listen to her teacher, but her eyes kept flitting over to the words etched over the blue lines on the paper.

She’d sat next to Steve for almost two months at this point, and he’d never said anything besides the occasional “hello” or “did you do the reading?”. They weren’t friends. They were barely even acquaintances. Nancy wasn’t exactly a nerd– or at least, not like

Mike and his squad were– but her and Barb hardly even existed in the same social realm as Steve Harrington and the rest of the jocks.

Was she supposed to respond? She didn't know the first thing about passing notes. Not that she was too good for it or anything, there just weren't that many people who bothered to engage her in it. Steve wasn't looking at her anymore, but did that mean he wasn't expecting anything?

After two minutes (though it felt like half an hour) of debating with herself, she gave in. One reply couldn't hurt, and she had to set the record straight, after all. As discretely as possible, she wrote out a small response under Steve's writing.

It's my brother's. He switched them to get back at me.

She watched Ms. Katz carefully, waiting for the perfect opportunity to set the note on the boy's desk quickly. She was never one to pass notes during class, and she refused to get in trouble for something as silly as this. After it was safe out of sight in Steve's hands, she returned to her note-taking.

She'd only written another line of notes by the time the scrap of paper was back on her desk. This time she didn't waste any time in opening it.

what'd you do to him?

The words were scrawled in that same lazy handwriting, contrasting sharply with her controlled cursive. She scribbled her answer back underneath and carefully placed it back.

He couldn't go to the movies with his friends since I wouldn't chaperone.

She heard Steve give a small snort before jotting something down and tossing it over.

Cruel woman, Wheeler. No wonder he set you up.

Nancy barely kept quiet when she read his response, shocked. She quickly replied, handwriting messier than usual, and all but slapped the paper back onto his desk.

I had homework!! Besides, he was being annoying, and it was a stupid movie! I doubt you would've gone if it had been your brother

bullshit. I'd be an awesome brother.

Well feel free to take Mike if you'd like to test that theory. He still wants to go to the movies.

Steve actually laughed when he read her reply, but he turned it into a cough before Ms. Katz picked up on it. Nancy couldn't help but feel pleased at the reaction.

maybe if you came along.

The bell rang before Nancy could write a response. She looked at the clock in shock, not realizing how much time had passed, and realized she hadn't paid attention to the last ten minutes of class. She'd have to copy the notes from Barb before the quiz. Although she was ready to go home, she found herself strangely disappointed by the end of the school day.

Steve had already packed his bag and was making his way to the door, but before he left he threw her a glance, a small smile on his lips. "See you on Wednesday," he said with a wink, ruffling his hair one last time.

Nancy could only watch him, not remembering to put away her things until he was out of sight. Barb was by her side in an instance.

"What was that?" Barb demanded as they made their way down the hallway.

"Nothing," Nancy defended, still holding the paper in her hand.

"You were passing notes with Steve Harrington and you expect me to believe it was nothing?" Barb asked, incredulous. "What did you even talk about?"

"*Nothing*, Barb!" Nancy said with a laugh, even though she herself had no idea what to think about the interaction. "It was just a conversation."

“Can I read the note?”

“No!” Nancy shot back immediately, though she wasn’t sure why. There was nothing incriminating about it, and she hadn’t lied when she said they’d just been talking, but she really didn’t want to see what Barb had to say about it. She clenched the paper a bit tighter.

Barb noticed, of course, and looked at her with raised eyebrows.

“Look, he was probably just bored or something. I doubt he’ll even look at me on Wednesday. It’s not like we’re suddenly friends or anything,” Nancy said with a shrug.

Barb sighed, but obediently changed the subject. As they made their way to the parking lot, Nancy saw Steve leaning against his car as he talked to Tommy Harding. She refused to look at him, not wanting to give Barb the satisfaction, but she got the feeling he was watching her. Something fluttered in her chest.

Maybe she’d let Mike off the hook this once.